LIMITING CASUALTIES: IMPERATIVE OR CONSTRAINT?

A MONOGRAPH
BY
Major Kevin S. Woods
Corps of Engineers

School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

SECOND TERM AY 96-97

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
	13/05/97	MONOGRAPH

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

LIMITING CASUALTIES: IMPERATIVE OR CONSTRAINT?

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)

MAJ KEVIN S. WOODS, USA

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

School of Advanced Military Studies
Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027

10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 words)*

As America finds itself answering to the needs of the world, the costs associated with less-than-vital military operations have become a growing subject of debate. One inevitable part of this debate is the issue of combat casualties and the widely held perception that the American public, and consequently, US political leadership, is excessively sensitive to suffering combat casualties. This monograph examines the question of whether this sensitivity should alter political and military decision-making.

The monograph examines past studies to document the effect of war casualties on public support and political popularity. The issue of casualties is discussed in relation to national security strategies and military decision-making. This discussion includes how national strategists often erroneously use the risk of casualties to support or block political strategies and decisions. For the military, this discussion includes the risk of allowing shifting political pressures to override the harsh realities of combat. Finally, the monograph studies the issue of *enemy* war casualties and collateral damage and what role they should have on national and military decision-making. The monograph concludes by providing guidance for how political and military leaders can properly integrate the issue of combat into their decision-making.

14. SUBJECT TERMS

CASUALTIES DECISION-MAKING
RISK MORALITY

15. NUMBER OF PAGES
55

16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	UNLIMITED

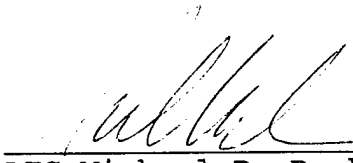
SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

Major Kevin S. Woods

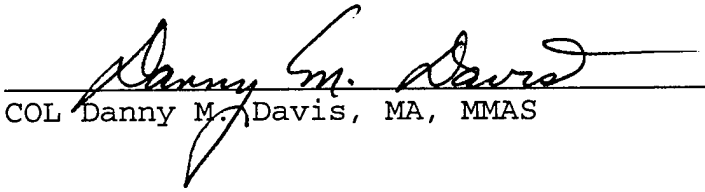
Title of Monograph: *Limiting Casualties: Imperative or Constraint?*

Approved by:



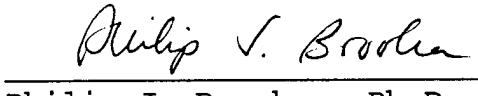
Monograph Director

LTC Michael D. Burke, MBA, MMAS



Director, School of Advanced Military Studies

COL Danny M. Davis, MA, MMAS



Director, Graduate Degree Program

Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

Accepted this 22d Day of May 1997

ABSTRACT

LIMITING CASUALTIES: IMPERATIVE OR CONSTRAINT by MAJ Kevin S. Woods, USA, 50 pages.

As America finds itself answering to the needs of the world, the costs associated with less-than-vital military operations have become a growing subject of debate. One inevitable part of this debate is the issue of combat casualties and the widely held perception that the American public, and consequently, US political leadership, is excessively sensitive to suffering combat casualties. This monograph examines the question of whether this sensitivity should alter political and military decision-making.

Since the issue of casualty sensitivity may only be a perception with no factual basis, the monograph begins by documenting the public reality of this uniquely American characteristic. However, the existence of a national sensitivity toward combat casualties does not necessary mean this sensitivity has any effect on national decision-making. The monograph, therefore, examines past studies to document the effect of war casualties on public support and political popularity. The issue of casualties is discussed in relation to national security strategies and military decision-making. This discussion includes how national strategists often erroneously use the risk of casualties to support or block political strategies and decisions. For the military, this discussion includes the risk of allowing shifting political pressures to override the harsh realities of combat.

Finally, the factors that restrain America's way of war are discussed. The monograph studies the issue of *enemy* war casualties and collateral damage and what role they should have on national and military decision-making. The monograph concludes by providing guidance for how political and military leaders can properly integrate the issue of combat into their decision making.

Table of Contents **Page**

"To save your world you asked this man to die: Would this man, could he see you now, ask why?"

W.H. Aden, "Epitaph for an Unknown Soldier" (1945)

I. Introduction

In his book, *The Commanders*, Bob Woodward makes it a point to mention that the then-Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh, always thought it appropriate that his office commanded a startling view of the seemingly endless rows of white tombstones in Arlington Cemetery. It was for him an unavoidable reminder of "the true, measurable price of war."[1] Secretary Marsh's expressed sensitivity to the great cost of war, undoubtedly shared by most other national leaders, deserves no special praise. It is what the American public expects from every leader entrusted with the lives of its fighting men and women. The American public trusts it leaders, both political and military, to commit American soldiers into harm's way for only the most vital of reasons. This sacred trust between the government and the people, however, is also a fragile trust. The American public, keenly aware of war's costs, is quick and unrelenting in holding leaders accountable for the consequences incurred. With the significant changes occurring in the world today, this sensitivity to war's costs has become a sharp issue in national policy.

As America finds itself continually answering to the needs of the world, the costs associated with less-than-vital military operations have become a subject of debate. One inevitable part of this debate is the issue of combat casualties. How many lives is the US willing to lose in order to achieve a particular strategic goal? Should economic or humanitarian objectives merit the same costs and risks as direct threats to the nation's

security? In the process of answering difficult questions such as these, the American public, and thus, American leadership, has grown increasingly sensitive to the cost of combat casualties. The concern, however, is whether this sensitivity has grown too large. Has the public's low tolerance for war casualties led political leadership to excessive vacillation and the US military to second guess their judgment in the use of combat power? Specifically, and the question this monograph answers is: *should the American public's increased awareness and sensitivity to combat casualties alter political and military decision making?*

The monograph builds a solution to this difficult question by examining it in parts. To begin, Section I will establish the existence of "casualty sensitivity". This is necessary to establish that the issue of casualty sensitivity is more than just a one time public phenomenon, or just a theme belonging to a small but vocal minority. Yet the mere existence of this sensitivity is not reason enough to study it. The value of studying the issue of casualty sensitivity stems from its uniqueness to America. Although other countries may exhibit similar feeling toward combat casualties, America's sensitivities have manifested themselves overtly in political debate and military operations. Section II examines this question of how and why America is particularly sensitivity to casualties.

Having a public that is uniquely sensitive to combat casualties, however, does not necessarily mean that it affects national decision-making. It is possible that although it exists as part of the American conscience, it has never had any measurable effect on US policy making. Section III examines this assertion by drawing from recent studies. The results of these studies will document the critical relationship between casualties and

public support. Moreover, they will provide the tools from which to analyze current policy methods. Sections IV and V discuss the topic of war casualties and their affect on national security strategy and military operations. The analysis includes how each area has allowed the issue of casualty sensitivity to permeate its system of thought. More importantly, each section contains the shortcomings and potential dangers of allowing the public's sensitivity to combat casualties to assume an unnatural priority among decision-making criteria.

Lastly, Section VI examines the issue of enemy war casualties and collateral damage. This issue, although affected by public sensitivities, is distinctly different from the previous discussion. To hate losing one's people and material possessions to the consequences of war is natural feeling common to most civilized countries. To refrain from killing and destroying enemy soldiers and property, however, is a moral constraint that has its roots deep within American traditional values. This section analyzes this self-imposed moral constraint by first reviewing the American traditions that underlay it, and then discussing the role of morality in national policy and military operations.

The monograph concludes that the public's sensitivity to casualties should be part of the political decision making process; however, it should not take precedence over the *cause* at stake. The political debate over whether to intervene must begin with a clear understanding of the cause involved. Decision-makers must understand casualties and public support in light of the cause. As a product of its society, the military has the obligation to understand the concerns of the nation and exercise its power within the American value system. Nevertheless, military operations must be free from transitory

political trends. The harsh reality of war, based on enduring principles, must be what shapes military operations.

II. Current Expectations

Before the beginning of the Gulf War, President Bush set out to garner crucial public support. To win over the American people, President Bush felt obligated to justify the potential cost of American lives. He did this partly by correlating the costs and the sacrifices to lofty, intangible goals. He understood the need to gain the public's support, he rightly perceived that to achieve significant support he must articulate objectives whose values merited the inevitable casualties. In his January 1991 State of Union address, the President Bush addressed the nation:

> Each of us will measure, within ourselves, the value of this great struggle. Any cost in lives is beyond our power to measure. But the cost of closing our eyes to aggression is beyond mankind's power to imagine.[2]

President Bush clearly understood the need to acknowledge the potential sacrifice of lives and to associate these sacrifices with meaning beyond mere material or economic objectives. The Bush administration had learned the American lesson about casualties and their affect on public support. This lesson, which began with the Korean War and solidified during the Vietnam War, is that the American public holds sacred the lives of its soldiers and national leaders wishing to place them in harm's way will *justify* the reasons or else risk the consequences of losing the public's support.

When a national crisis occurs, and the nation considers military operations, the media quickly takes up the issue of costs and risks. In November 1995, the cover of *Time* magazine featured the picture of a young Army specialist. Plastered in bold print to the side of his helmeted head were the words, "Is Bosnia Worth Dying For?"[5] *Time* magazine had reduced the difficult issue of Bosnia down to one short question and posed it to all of America. It was as if the media had reduced the complex issue of Bosnia to a vote, and the only question the American public needed to consider was one of American casualties. The media had well documented the dying and suffering in Bosnia; however, national leaders had yet to make a compelling case for risking US lives. The long delay before taking up the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia was due largely to the President waiting to ensure the situation had reached a point where the risk to US soldiers was minimal. Whether right or wrong, the issue of American casualties had dominated the decision-making regarding action in the Balkans.

This need to justify military operations in terms of costs is clearly recognized in the US military. Prior to the recent deployment of a peace-keeping force in Bosnia, Secretary of Defense, William J. Perry, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John M. Shalikashvili, met with Congress. In a congressional hearing that lasted for hours, both men were repeatedly questioned as to the cost in lives and dollars of the operation. The point was clear–there would be no congressionally accepted military action until the case and the costs were accepted by the Congress and the American people.

The fact that the military sometimes voices concern over the unrealistic expectations toward combat casualties further illustrates the existence of an unprecedented and

growing trend. General Carl Mundy, prior to retiring as Commandant of the Marine Corps, castigated the public's expectation of a casualty-free military as unrealistic.[4] This same attitude has found further voice in two recently published *Parameters* articles.[5] Both articles challenge the growing expectation that interventions and war can, or should be, casualty free. In one article, US Army Colonel Karl Eikenberry argues that placing too great an emphasis on minimizing casualties can adversely affect the military's mission. For Eikenberry, the subject of casualties is best left unmentioned in military doctrine and instead considered seriously, but implicitly, as it plans for war. In the other article, Harvey Sapolsky and Jeremy Shapiro argue that the country's growing hesitancy toward suffering casualties in pursuit of national objectives is severely limiting our nation's ability to exercise power and, consequently, makes us susceptible to pressures our adversaries can ignore.[6]

The issue of casualty sensitivity has received criticism in the civilian media. Thomas L. Friedman, writing in *The New York Times*, suggests that this new attitude toward casualties is beginning to separate us from our allies.[7] To make his point, Friedman contrasts the difference between American and French reactions to recent combat casualties. When the US took eighteen casualties in one day the US quickly withdrew from Somalia. However, when the French had suffered 49 men killed in Bosnia and another 300 wounded, there was no French public outcry for the removal of French troops. When US Air Force pilot CPT Scott O'Grady was shot down over Bosnia in June 1995, it became the top news story of the day. However, when two French soldiers happened to be killed in Sarajevo on the same weekend as the conclusion of the Tour de

France cycling race, it was the cycling race that dominated French news coverage. Moreover, earlier in the week when a Tour de France cyclist crashed and died, Paris newspapers were quick to plaster his picture across their the front pages. In contrast, not a single French newspaper printed the names of the two French soldiers killed in Savajevo. The French threatened withdrawal from Bosnia because President Jacques Chirac believed they were being "humiliated", not because of casualties. Friedman predicts, "America's low tolerance for war casualties is going to become increasingly problematic in the coming years". He concludes that America cannot lead if it will not put its own people at risk. In the future where small wars no longer elicit emotional support, it must be strong political and military leadership that continues to sustain America's position as military super-power and world leader.[8]

The point of referencing these recent writings is not so much to examine their arguments as it is to simply document the fact that "casualty awareness" is a well entrenched national value that has increased in significance among political and military decision makers. It has become an openly discussed issue that effects both political and military decision-makers. Yet the existence of this sensitivity appears unique to America. Although most countries possess some degree of discomfort toward the costs of war, few possess it to the degree of America. Therefore, the natural question to follows is: where did America derive this seemingly unique sensitivity to casualties?

III. Why is America Sensitive to Casualties?

America certainly has pre-conceived expectations regarding casualties, and national leaders certainly understand the need to justify the purposes of intervention in order to manage these expectations, but that does not explain why these expectations exist. Where do America's expectations for low casualties come from? There is no definitive answer to this difficult question; there are, however, some partial answers worth considering. To begin, holding sacred the lives of its citizens and soldiers is not unique to America. Most civilized nations uphold the value of human life and if given the choice would certainly choose to minimize the loss of life in war. Yet, there are critical differences between America today and other modern countries. By examining some of these variances a picture begins to emerge that helps to explain why America remains slow to intervene and reluctant to risk lives in combat.

Although casualties have always been a consideration, it was not until after WWII that world leaders found themselves forced to substantiate the value of foreign policy in terms of potential losses.[9] There are many reasons for this significant change. First, the US had become the leader of the free world. As the only country capable of countering the Soviets, America assumed the greater role of containing communism world wide. Moreover, alliances designed to further broaden military might also served to expand US vital and important interests[10]. The interests of America's allies became America's interests. Second, potential battlefields were often remote and outside of many American's scope of understanding or interest. Without an overt action like the attack of the US fleet at Pearl Harbor or the sinking of US merchant vessels in the Atlantic,

politicians found it difficult to elicit the public support necessary to sustain a successful military operation.[11]

Third, the advent of the nuclear bomb, as demonstrated to the world in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, put into question the utility of total war. Instead, the US pursued limited objectives using limited war, and limited wars naturally led to an even greater concern over casualties.[12] The less resounding the cause the less reason to risk soldiers lives. Clausewitz foresaw this when he wrote:

> ". . . The less intense the motives [for war], the less will the military element's natural tendency to violence coincide with political directives. As a result, war will be driven further from its natural course, the political objective will be more at variance with the ideal war, and the conflict will seem increasingly political in nature."[13]

Fourth, although today's volunteer military has been in existence since the end of the Vietnam War, the conscription military that existed during the preceding 28 years established the precedence. A draft military was the concern of many citizens; thus, considerations to employ it were met with a great deal of public interest. Today's all-volunteer military still finds an active public interest that far exceeds the level of most other countries.[14]

Fifth, the tremendous amount of dollars consumed by research and development has continually paid off in the US maintaining a technological edge over all potential adversaries. This technology advantage, however, brings with it an expectation that dollars should compensate for personnel losses.[15] Technology should somehow allow the US military to accomplish the military objectives with less need to risk lives in the process. The outcome of recent US interventions has repeatedly reinforced the expectation that the

US military is so much more capable than any potential adversary. It appears that when properly planned the US can successfully wage armed intervention with minimal loss of life.

US Personnel Killed in Action[16]

Conflict	Total KIA
World War I	126,000
World War II	291, 557
Korea	33,651
Vietnam	47,364
Grenada	16
Panama	24
Persian Gulf	293

Of course these numbers are only outcomes without the context that makes them worthwhile, nevertheless, it is easy to grasp how such dramatic drops in casualty counts could quickly lead to false expectations.

A sixth and final reason that national leaders are compelled to objectify foreign interventions in relation to potential losses is the media. Death and suffering recorded and broadcast into America's living rooms personalizes war and brings a public concern that before WWII was limited to radio broadcasts and dated news reels. As evidenced above, the need for a strong justification for employing the military is critical to maintaining public support. Without the public hearing and understanding a strong justification for intervention, the media's ability to fill the leadership void and influence public emotion becomes immense. A void in national direction leaves the public open to media filtered perceptions and other less qualified sources of information. The Vietnam War serves as an excellent example.

During the Vietnam War the ability of the media to impact public consensus was immense. From 1965, when large-scale US combat forces were first inserted in Vietnam through 1967, US forces inflicted staggering losses on Communist forces. Yet during this time period public support for the war steadily declined. By the end of 1967 public support for the war fell permanently below 50 percent.[17] Growing numbers of Americans began questioning the costs of the war as it became obvious that no clear objectives existed and casualties were continuing to mount. At the end of January 1968, the enemy began its long-expected Tet offensive. Although US forces had expected it, Tet was more intense and more widespread than anticipated. The outcome had mixed results. US forces dealt a staggering defeat to the Viet Cong, but the American people and many of the policy-making elite became demoralized.[18] US press coverage gave the impression that the VC-NVA forces had struck a massive blow against US and ARVN forces. Most importantly, US casualties had jumped to the highest weekly levels of the war. Throughout February the American people viewed television news programs that ran continual footage of the carnage. Support for the President began to seriously falter.[19] The media had touched the sensitivities of the public. As never before, the media had effectively captured the *costs* of the war, and in comparison, President Johnson's ability, or desire, to sell the *cause* was sorely inadequate.

A more recent example of media influence occurred in Somalia during the fall of 1993. News coverage shown after the death of 18 US soldiers in early October captured all the cruelties of war–limited or otherwise. The television image of dead US soldiers being dragged and denigrated through the streets of Mogadishu shook the moral

indignities of every watching American. The same media that had shown starving Somalian children was now showing dead Americans. Support for the operation dropped immediately to less than fifty percent.[20] CNN contributed to US intervention in Somalia and CNN gave cause for the US to withdraw.

America's sensitivity to casualties has existed for over fifty years. Furthermore, these sensitivities have increased with the collapse of the Soviet empire and the rise of information technologies and precision weapons. The threat has faded and US military capabilities have leaped ahead. America has every reason to be reluctant about interventions and sensitive to any loss of US life. Yet, an increased sensitivity toward casualties is only of passing interest unless it truly affects pubic support. Does the loss of lives in war affect public support? The results of several RAND studies attempt to answer this exact question.

IV. Do Casualties Affect Public Opinion?

Are political leaders correct in ascribing a relationship between casualties and public support? A 1985 RAND study documented three studies that sought to answer this question by using data from the Korean and Vietnam Wars. John E. Mueller of the University of Rochester conducted the most extensive analysis. Mueller's 1973 study sought to explain the differences in the *rate of decline* in public support between the Korean and Vietnam wars. During the Korean War, public support dropped rapidly in the early phases then declined at a much slower rate. In Vietnam, on the other hand, public

support declined at a fairly constant rate. To study the similarities and differences between the two wars, he used the following eleven factors: locale, scope, tactics, military limitations, popular justification, domestic Presidential politics, how the wars started and ended, *casualty levels*, domestic economic effects, the amount and source of domestic opposition, and the Cold War atmosphere. He found that public support for both wars behaved in a relatively similar manner. Mueller concluded, that among the many factors he tested, total casualty levels was the variable that best fit the support curves for both wars. Specifically, the study found that every time US casualties went up by a factor of ten, support for both wars decreased by approximately 15 percent.[21]

A later study by Jeffrey Milstein reached much the same conclusion. In Milstein's study public support for the Vietnam War was correlated with a series of cumulative costs such as financial costs, total number of military personnel required to serve in Vietnam, casualty levels, and so forth. The study found that the correlation between the casualties and public support of the war was 0.94. He concluded that, "the most significant costs to the American people were the number of American 'boys' killed and wounded in Vietnam. . . . The more casualties incurred, the more the public disapproved of the President and his Vietnam policy."[22]

Finally, in a more recent study, Samuel Kernell reinforces the conclusions reached by Mueller and Milstein. Kernell studied the *monthly* casualty rates during the Korean and Vietnam Wars and compared them to the popularity of the Presidents. The study found a negative correlation (-0.68). As casualty rates went up, presidential popularity dropped. In studying President Truman, the most important variable affecting his popularity was

casualty rates. For President Johnson, however, Kernell found two variables: the monthly number of US war dead and the number of bombing sorties over Vietnam. Both variables independently exerted a powerful effect on Presidential popularity. Concerning war casualties, Kernell's analysis goes as far as to document that an average monthly figure of 478 KIA correlated to a decline of about one and a half percentage points in President Johnson's popularity. Other than bombing sorties (enemy KIA's), no other tested variable came close to having this much impact on political leadership.[23]

These three studies do not provide irrefutable evidence that casualties affect public opinion, however, without evidence to the contrary they cannot be easily disregarded. Moreover, these studies only confirm what many leaders during this war implicitly understood. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in a 1961 memorandum to President Kennedy made this obvious when he stated:

> We would be almost certain to get increasingly mired down in an inconclusive struggle. . . . The domestic political implications of accepting the objective are also grave, although it is our feeling that the country will respond better to a firm initial position than to courses of action that lead us in only gradually, and that in the meantime are sure to involve casualties.[24]

McNamara understood the linkage between casualties and public support and the importance of acting resolutely in order to rally public opinion.

The study up to this point has documented the clear trend toward a greater sensitivity to combat casualties, the origins and circumstances that have contributed to this sensitivity, and how this sensitivity manifests itself in the rise and fall of public support.

With nothing more said, the impression would be that the public is intolerant of all combat casualties regardless of the circumstances. This, however, is far from the truth. The public can be both sensitive and tolerant of casualties when necessary. The most important factor governing public support and tolerance of casualties in war is the cause at stake and the leadership's ability to rally support for that cause.

V. Leadership and Causes

Since the end of the Cold War the linkage between national security and strategic objectives have become increasingly blurred. Gone are the clear strategic and moral purposes that garnered broad support during the Cold War. As the nation's leadership continues to define America's place as the sole super-power amidst an unprecedented changing world order, national security objectives remain broad and malleable. One consequence of this changing world order is an increased difficulty in determining the circumstances that justify the use of military force. The evidence of this current unsettled state is that America has recently intervened with force for purposes and in ways that it never has before and where arguably smaller threats, interests, and principles have been at stake. World change has placed a renewed demand on national leadership.

When asked to support a military operation, the American public must weigh the intangible benefits of achieving foreign policy objectives against the tangible costs of soldier's lives. The great cost of war is the lives of service personnel. It is a tremendous price that demands a purpose of equal value. This has always been the heavy burden of

American leadership. The reconciliation between the costs of the war and its purpose is critical in a democracy. Not only are political leaders responsible for accurately representing the values of the people, but the people must accept the price of the war if political leaders hope to gain the support necessary to conduct a sustained conflict. To gain this support leaders must clearly articulate the objective of the war. This leadership responsibility has never been easy, but it is made all the more difficult the further the cause strays away from direct threats to national security. The public quickly supports threats to the American way of life; however, less discernible threats such as threats to the international equilibrium require convincing leadership.

The above-mentioned studies document the relationship between public support and casualties. Determining the nature of this relationship, however, leads to the next set of questions. If the acceptance of casualty levels determines the level of support for a military operation, then what factors determine whether the level of casualties is acceptable? Researcher Eric Larson undertook this important question in a 1996 RAND study.[25] During his research Larson formed a model from which to characterize and assist in thinking about support for an intervention. The model Larson used to measure and compare US military operations has four distinct variables:

- Do the benefits seem to be great enough?
- Are the prospects for success good enough?
- Are the expected or actual costs low enough?
- Is there a consensus of support from political leaders?

Larson used these four factors when comparing the support for WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Panama, and Somalia. In his study, Larson found that the

public's aversion to loss of US lives is not new. In fact, in some recent US military interventions support had less to do with tolerance for casualties than with the debatable merits of the military operations themselves. The study has several interesting conclusions that differ somewhat with conventional wisdom.

First, the study found that the public does not possess an unconditional aversion to all combat casualties. Although the public hopes for a low-to-no casualty operation, it bases its support and level of tolerance on the merits of each case. Whenever the reasons for introducing US forces lacked either moral force or broadly recognized national interests, analysts could expect support to be very thin.[26] Interestingly, the Gulf War serves as a good example where the majority viewed the principles and interests at stake worth the prospect of high casualties. With pre-war predictions ranging as high 30,000 battle deaths, the potential costs were approaching the casualty levels of Korea and Vietnam. Nevertheless, as one poll indicated, the majority of those polled believed that the Gulf situation merited the costs of war, and the majority continued to believe the situation was worthwhile even if expected levels of battle deaths reached as high as 40,000.[27]

Larson's second conclusion is that leadership is central in determining domestic support for US military involvement's. Large segments of the population rely upon political leaders to unravel the complex issues involved in prospective military operations. Predictably, these groups usually respond in accordance with the leaders they hold to be credible. As leaders begin to question or oppose an intervention, so do their followers. When national leadership is divided, whether partisan or not, the public too is often divided.

As a parting thought, Larson proffers a warning. While acknowledging that it is healthy for a democracy to carefully weigh its decisions on the use of force, the potential consequences of these debates can have negative effects. They can lead to an enduring division within the public and an ever brittle support that adversaries can easily exploit. These, in turn, can lead to both failed interventions and incorrect lessons for the future. Most importantly, these disagreements may erode the credibility of threats of force to protect important US interests. Ironically, without a clear commitment to use force where necessary, diplomacy and deterrence (the bloodless tools of coercion) lose their effectiveness and potentially cost the nation even more.[28]

VI. The Risk of No-Risk Policies

What are the dangers of embracing a policy (unspoken or otherwise) that treats the avoidance of casualties as a high priority? The answer has two areas of consequence: national security strategy and military operations. A discussion of each follows.

National Security Strategy

Strategy debates about how best to ensure security for the US have many variants. These "grand strategies" that compete against one another in public discourse differ most markedly in the level of global involvement each one advocates. Those who adhere to the tenets of *isolationism* (sometimes referred to as a policy of "detachment") mark one end of this debate spectrum while advocates of *internationalism* mark the other end. Today's

isolationists embrace a constricted view of US national interests that renders internationalism not only unnecessary, but counter-productive. National defense–the protection of the security, liberty, and property of the American people–is the only vital US interest. Isolationists believe that given the current unrivaled military strength of the US, and it protection by two oceans, the US can seldom justify any military intervention abroad.[29]

Isolationists often use the current trend of casualty intolerance to support their position. For the isolationist, internationalist's objectives often lack the value necessary to risk the lives of American soldiers. Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, points out that it is not enough to decide that the US has one or more interests at stake in some foreign matter, because interests are not of unlimited value. The benefits of gaining desired objectives have to be balanced against the cost of intervention. One important cost of intervention, Bandow points out, is the great human cost. He argues that it was partly Woodrow Wilson's activist visions of a new world order that drove him to take the country into the European slugfest of WWI, which left 116,000 Americans dead and led to the outbreak of WWII, which killed another 407,000 Americans. Bandow continues to argue that internationalist policies since the end of WWII have led to more than 112,000 American deaths in undeclared conflicts. He concludes that the lives of Americans are not there for policy-makers to expend for any purpose, they are there to defend the American community.[30]

Unfortunately, Bandow's argument builds on a faulty assumption. His argument, like so many other isolationist's arguments, uses the issue of high casualty counts to obscure

the real issue. As discussed earlier, the effect and tolerance of the public toward combat casualties begins first with the cause at stake. When casualty numbers shake public support it is usually because the cause lacks value or the cause is backed by too little leadership. Isolationist may have a viable argument for national security, but using the fear of taking combat casualties to support that argument merely plays to the emotions of the public.

The other end of the strategy spectrum debate is the strategy of internationalism. Advocates of internationalism believe US security requires active engagement throughout the world. The most important point behind internationalism is that to attain and sustain what is best for the US, to include security, the US must be an active participant in the international community. Theodore Roosevelt expressed the essence of internationalism when he stated, "A nation's first duty is within its borders, but it is not thereby absolved from facing its duties in the world as a whole; and if it refuses to do so it merely forfeits its right to struggle for a place among the people that shape the destiny of mankind."[31]

Advocates of internationalism are equally passionate in their argument for global involvement–militarily and otherwise. Robert Kagan, an Alexander Hamilton Fellow at American University, argues that if the national interest consists in the preservation of American preeminence, the same general approach that brought America its position of super power ought to be applied to keeping it there.[32] An active involvement in world affairs helped build America and, therefore, should continue be central to America's national security policies. Drawing back from the world leaves an international void that

begs to be filled and passes the initiative to those who oppose America's preference of international order.

Furthermore, Kagan maintains it was "the idealistic impulses of Americans" and "their tendency to want to remake the world in their own image" that played an important and perhaps even essential role in bringing about the peaceful downfall of Communism.[33] An isolated America could not have defeated the threat of Communism. America's belief in such values as liberty and democracy provided the strength to combat Communism. The ideas of Communism were depicted as intrinsically evil and thereby energized America's foreign policies and its unrelenting support for a powerful military. The cause, couched in American values, sustained the cost.

Finally, Kagan takes issue with those leaders who depict public opinion as if it were itself an exhaustible, finite resource that dwindles with every overseas deployment of military force. The truth, he says, is that over the past 50 years the public has proved to be neither unquestionably acquiescent, nor stubbornly opposed to force overseas. They have, however, been consistently committed to America ideals and their spread abroad, and prudent enough to avoid the self-destruction inherent with the pursuit of ideological crusades.[34] The public will understand the need to sacrifice to maintain American hegemony. Although unspoken, Kagan appears to be saying that the cause of spreading American values and ideals is cause enough for the American public to support the cost in casualties. All that is lacking is leadership.

Not all advocates of global intervention are so indirect about the issue of casualties as Kagan. Harvey M. Sopolsky and Jeremy Shapiro tackled the issue directly in a recent

Parameters article. Their thesis is that America's military strength and geographical security have brought about undesirable self-imposed constraints and vulnerabilities. Specifically, America has grown ever more sensitive about casualties–our own military casualties, enemy civilian casualties, and even enemy military casualties.[35] Sapolsky argues that during the Cold War the US began to develop new restraints and inhibitions regarding the use of military power against our enemies. A moral impulse within American society emerged that considered killing civilians or destroying their livelihoods as neither necessary nor virtuous. Killing in war in order to guard one's family and way-of-life no longer directly applied. The Korean and Vietnam Wars had proven this. America had found out from both these wars that even defeat did not matter much. America's basic quality of life had not changed. .[36] National wealth and security, it seems, allowed Americans to begin to reflect and act on ideals that in earlier times had always succumbed to the baser needs of the nation.

What did matter from these wars, however, were the consequences of the casualties–both to the families that suffered and to the responsible politicians. The political consequences began to matter more than the assessment of the opposing forces.[37] President Bush's reply to why US forces had not pursued the Iraqi Republican Guard during the close of the Gulf War was that "we are not in the business of slaughter". Sapolky's response to the Bush's reply is, "what business is war. . . if not slaughter?[38] Before the Haiti operation, in a seemingly backwards reasoning process, President Clinton asked for the casualty figures for the recent military operations in Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf. He stated that he thought the public would tolerate the average.[39] President

Clinton failed to understand that it would be the "cause" that would dictate public tolerance, not history.

For Sapolsky, allowing a sensitivity toward casualties to affect the issue of national security is clearly troubling. We possess the power to gain our way at home and abroad, he says, but we lack the will to impose it.[40] Sapolky's argument is that war is a nasty, violent affair, unchanged and necessary. His shortcoming, however, is that he fails to give an adequate reason for America to rid itself of what he believes to be a distracting sensitivity toward combat casualties. It is not enough to say America must harden itself to the reality of combat casualties, for that is the price of world leadership. Sacrifices need reasons. World leadership, and the potential for casualties, first begins with domestic leadership and a vision that can move the public to follow.

Internationalists, like the isolationists, have a problem. Whereas isolationists avoid the necessary issue of *cause*, interventionists find *most* causes worthy of support. To make their case, interventionists often argue with broad sweeping causes. Causes such as "maintaining our global position of leadership" or "supporting human rights" are difficult to debate and are of little use for a public trying to discern the costs and benefits at stake. Moreover, these broad causes are often the internationalist's cause of choice when definitive reasons are either absent or publicly unacceptable. Again, like the isolationist, the need is for leadership that can define the necessity of the intervention and muster the public's support.

Isolationists see no good reason to risk casualties given America's current position of power. Interventionists, on the other hand, argue that to sustain America's position of

power, interventions abroad are necessary. Are these two positions irreconcilable? Military analyst Edward Luttwak argues that there is a middle ground that may answer the need of both groups. In a *Foreign Affairs* article entitled "Post-Heroic Warfare", Luttwak posits that the changing conditions of warfare have opened the door for a different way of applying combat power and accomplishing military objectives. Referring to it as a "political given", he concedes that the American public will not "sanction interventions in place after place without end"; however, he maintains this obstacle is contingent upon the cost in US casualties and the methods of intervention employed.[41] The problem lies with the US military. He accuses the US military of continuing to organize, equip, and train for large-scale, "Napoleonic warfare".

Luttwak's idea of Napoleonic warfare implies large-scale combat, an emotional cause, and a high casualty count. Unfortunately, says Luttwak, this method of warfare is overly risky considering the limited objectives of today's foreign policy. Emotional causes that can rally a nation are not possible for every interest the US must contend with in this changing world. Luttwak's solution is to use America's technological advantage to fight with methods similar to the "cabinet wars" of eighteenth-century Europe. Warfare that sought to attain limited objectives with casualty-avoiding methods. Like the Roman Legions, the idea would involve designing and fighting in ways that sought to preserve the country's precious and limited lifeblood. Technologies and methods such as air power and special forces units would predominate.[42]

Luttwak's seemingly reasonable argument has a critical shortcoming. Typical of the internationalist argument, he quickly discards the reason for intervening. Leadership and

cause play no role in his new form of intervention. Assuming interventions will be necessary, and that casualty minimization should take *priority*, he advocates a watered-down method of war that leverages technology while trying to bypass war's suffering. The published response to Luttwak's article echoed the conviction often expressed by experienced Army leaders. It is the same argument used to counter military pundits overly enamored with the possibilities of technology, especially air power. The counter-argument to Luttwak is that technology cannot replace the need for the ground soldier. It took ground forces to drive the Iraqi army from Kuwait and it is taking ground forces to guarantee peace in Bosnia.[43] The need for undeniable physical presence, of sustained and unmistakable force, is only found with soldiers on the ground and taking risk. Interestingly, what seemed to be a convenient compromise between the isolationist and interventionist has found disagreement from the very people who must assume the risk of casualties. When it comes to taking casualties, the military, especially the land force services, do not walk the same tight rope as the public or the politicians–or do they?

Military Operations and Casualties

While the public may have recently discovered a fresh concern for combat casualties, the US military's concern for casualties has always been solemn and unswerving. To state it otherwise would be to completely misunderstand the nature of the US military. The military's concern for its soldier's lives goes far beyond training or doctrine. It is a concern that manifests itself deep within the military culture. Rooted firmly in the training of every American fighting soldier are maxims like "never leaving a fallen buddy in

combat". Few admonitions to junior leaders sting worse than the charge of not taking care of their assigned soldiers. However, the military expects this level of concern from leaders at the combat troop-unit level. At the troop level, death and suffering are real and body counts have faces and families. The deeper question here is whether military decision-makers hold a concern for casualties that goes beyond expected warfighting concerns. Are senior military leaders hesitant in committing soldiers in combat because of factors such as public and political sensitivities?

At the highest levels of the US defense establishment, the concern over the costs of intervention have certainly found voice. The best examples have been the general guidelines put forth by the many leaders that have occupied key defense positions since Vietnam. Probably the most influential views were those articulated publicly in November 1984 by the then-Secretary of Defense Casper Wienberger. With the country still trying to come to terms with the aftermath of Vietnam, and the expectation that the future will demand more limited interventions abroad, Weinberger felt the need to define the conditions that would aid in decision-making and avoid the quagmire of another Vietnam. He proposed that any military option meet six conditions before the US committed forces abroad.[44]

- Interests vital to the US or its allies must be at stake.
- There must be some reasonable assurance of congressional and popular support.
- The commitment of US forces to combat should come only as a last resort.
- The US should commit to force only if it is prepared to do so wholeheartedly and with the clear intention of winning.
- Force should only be deployed on behalf of clearly defined objectives.

- The composition and disposition of forces should be continually reassessed and where necessary adjusted as the conditions change.

Although these conditions had no binding effect on decision-makers, they did fill a necessary policy void. Right or wrong, they set a framework from which to debate potential interventions and in the process significantly narrowed the gate to future US interventions. The issue of casualties would be integral to this debate.

After the Gulf War and during the debates over interventions into Bosnia and Somalia, General Colin Powell, as Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, offered six questions that should be addressed before any decision or commitment to intervene is made.[45]

- Is the political objective important, clearly defined, and understood?
- Have all other non-violent policy means failed?
- Will military force achieve the objective?
- What will the cost be?
- Have the gains and risks been analyzed?
- Once the situation is altered by force, how will it develop further and what will the consequences be?

General Powell also emphasized the need to use overwhelming force to accomplish the mission. He opposed the view that the military could use force in limited proportions to accomplish limited objectives. In contrast to Powell, this "limited objectives" view was later favored by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin.

Like Casper Wienberger, General Powell set demanding conditions in order to prevent the frivolous commitment of forces to unachievable and costly interventions. Unfortunately, these itemized prerequisites bring their own set of problems. Both use

costs (read casualties) as a key consideration prior to intervention. By weighing the costs of the intervention, they seek to reduce support for all but the most important and achievable of interventions. Unfortunately, these checklists have also forced national leaders to match the benefit of the objective to an estimated number of casualties. How does a nation place a value on the lives of its soldiers? What objective merits one hundred or one thousand American lives? Soldiers cannot be without value, freely expended on every national need that might arise, yet quantifying their worth somehow cheapens their sacrifice. At a minimum soldiers deserve to know that their sacrifice will have an intrinsic value that far exceeds whatever measurable standard political leaders may deem worthy. Moreover, this open discussion of costs and casualties quickly detracts from the central issue. Counting out the number of casualties to meet a specific objective is a slippery slope. Either the cause at stake merits the risk and cost of America lives or it does not. Although America must value the lives of its soldiers, soldiers cannot be preserved and protected from harm like ordinary US civilians. Soldiers are expected to fight, take risk, and sacrifice their lives if necessary. National leaders responsible for the difficult decisions of committing forces to combat need to remain focused on the reasons for intervention and its implications to national security. The costs in lives is indeed important, but it must not be the starting point of the debate.

In addition to the danger of using casualty numbers as a means to decide on an intervention, estimates can be wholly without factual foundation. Assessing casualties is a difficult task that often produces inaccurate results. War has too many variables. Even with adequate time and the best of computer simulations and military experts available, the

casualty predictions for the Gulf War were wildly incorrect. This problem of inaccurate estimations is further magnified by the unintended consequences they can effect. Once the experts release their casualty estimates, these estimates quickly assume a life of their own, potentially causing a cascade of decisions that might not have otherwise been made.

Finally, assessing the level of casualties is heavily dependent on the method used to employ force. Often times decisions to commit US forces are argued and decided long before the methods have been clarified. How the military decides to accomplish the assigned mission depends on many factors; however, no factor supersedes the requirement to accomplish the mission. Failing to complete the mission deepens the tragedy of any lives lost in the process. Thus, since casualties cannot be accurately projected–especially without having "wargamed" the methods to be employed–using them as a decision criteria is irrational and only panders to public emotion. Discussions of costs and risks to US soldiers as part of the political debate, as advocated by Weinberger and Powell, is premature and obscures the real issue when debating the need to intervene.

The highest military echelons are not the only level within the military with a broad concern over taking casualties. The need to limit casualties has become part of the American way of war and has found its way into US military warfighting doctrine. One need only to read through the US military's joint warfighting doctrine to find ready references to minimizing casualties. In Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations*, the goal of war is partially defined as ". . . to win as quickly as possible and with as few causalities as possible."[46] Army FM 100-7, *Decisive Force: The Army in Theater Operations*, describes the measure of success in theater operations as "achieving the theater strategic objectives,

while striving to incur minimal casualties."[47] This is not to say the US military is presently hamstrung by an unnatural fear of taking casualties, but it does point out a stated doctrinal concern that has the potential to increase in emphasis. There is the danger that a doctrinal emphasis on minimizing casualties, further influenced by a political emphasis on minimizing casualties, can easily become an unspoken expectation among military leaders. With political leaders clamoring for bloodless interventions, the military leader on the ground must have the security of knowing that at least within the military doing what is right still requires risk, sacrifice, and possible death. This security is most powerful when it is inculcated throughout the military organization and sealed in its doctrine. Doctrine is powerful in that it provides a common vision with what is fundamentally right. Combat leaders, secure that their doctrine describes the reality on the battlefield, are empowered to act decisively.

Having casualty limitation as an operational goal also has the potential of propagating unintended consequences. Karl Eikenberry describes several potential repercussions when a military becomes too cautious.[48] Against second- or third-rate opponents the effect of minimizing casualties will probably have little consequence. However, in conflicts that far exceed 100 hours of fighting and where the demands for risk and sacrifice become significant, unexpected consequences may emerge. Eikenberry argues, "A military that on its own volition discards courses of action because they are to costly may lose the spirit of creativity and innovation. By way of example, Eikenberry points out the Germans suffered over 150,000 casualties in their blitzkrieg against France in 1940. Had the

German General Staff discarded any option that seemed too painful to consider, they might not have achieved their tremendous success.[49]

Consider an extreme case of how future US combat leaders might act on the battlefield. Wary of the need to protect their forces and avoid casualties if possible, these combat leaders hesitate and look for confirmation with every decision. Possessing an unfocused fear of inflicting unnecessary "collateral damage", they drift in a sea of indecisiveness, unanchored by either doctrine or decisive direction. It is the worse of all scenarios: combat leadership vacillating at the point in battle where resoluteness is most critical. Field Marshall von Manstein understood the demands on the leader faced with deteriorating conditions and forced to risk much to gain much. It is here the leader needs the full support of the military in which he belongs.

> It [is] the hour that must show whether the will of the attacker to exert himself to the very limit of physical endurance is stronger than that of the defender to go on resisting. The struggle of deciding whether to call for a last supreme effort, at the risk of having ultimately demanded all that sacrifice in vain, is one that can only be fought out in the heart of the commander concerned.[50]

Field Marshall von Manstein's idea of what is required in combat leaves no room for military leaders colored by sensitivities that fail to grasp the realities of combat. A combat leader forced to make the inevitable difficult decision to continue fighting cannot have a doctrine that irresponsibly reminds him that minimal casualties is best.

There is another danger inherent in using casualty numbers to measure military success or failure. The public and sometimes political leaders are often unaware of the larger military picture. At the tactical level casualties are inevitable, yet it is at the

operational and strategic levels of war that success must be assessed. A large number of casualties taken in a particular battle may get extra attention from the media and result in a waning of public support, yet the outcome of the battle may have had significant operational success. Future battles may have become unnecessary and future casualties may have been minimized. An American Civil War battle involving Stonewall Jackson illustrates this point.

In the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862, Confederate forces led by General Stonewall Jackson had the mission to keep pressure on the Union forces around Washington and prevent their concentration for an attack against Richmond. On March 23, 1862, Jackson attacked Union Forces at the Battle of Kernstown. Working from an inaccurate intelligence report from his cavalry, Jackson believed he had adequate forces to attack and win. Although his soldiers were weary from marching, a hasty reconnaissance by Jackson determined that now was the best opportunity to attack. Jackson recognized after contact that he was fighting a much larger force. The Union force was 9,000 strong against Jackson's 3,600. Outnumbered and short of ammunition, the Confederate forces became desperate and exhausted after hours of intense fighting. They had exceeded their tactical culminating point and were eventually routed. Confederate casualties totaled 455; Union casualties were 568. However, although this battlewas a tactical defeat, it yielded important operational results. Taking immense risk, Jackson had convinced the Union senior leaders that a large Confederate force threatened Washington. Union General Banks was ordered to return to the Valley, thereby diverting thousands of Union troops

from reinforcing McClellan's army.[51] Assessing Jackson's actions by casualty counts alone would miss the point entirely.

Although the issue of casualty sensitivity in US military doctrine is evident, its scope is still fairly limited. This, however, may not continue to be the case. Military analysts and leaders discussing the future battlefield are giving casualty avoidance a much greater emphasis. Military analyst Michael Mazarr, in examining the current Revolution in Military Affairs, lists *disengaged combat* as one of his four principles for future defense planning. Disengaged combat is simply the technological ability to engage enemy forces at ranges greater than the enemy's. Mazarr gives several reasons why this principle is both necessary and advantageous. First, disengaged combat is the culmination of a historical trend in western warfare. Since WWII, US and British forces have generally avoided close combat, preferring instead to call in artillery and close air support. This trend continued through the Korea and Vietnam wars. In sharp contrast, the Chinese, North Koreans, and Vietnamese units facing western forces routinely conducted suicidally close operations. Second, the lethality of the modern battlefield is forcing tactics away from closing with the enemy. The modern battlefield is so lethal, says Mazarr, that movement of large-scale forces is "tantamount to suicide".[52] From a strictly capability and risk perspective, US forces have clear reasons to avoid close combat.

Unlike his first two reasons for supporting disengaged combat, Mazarr's third reason is of questionable utility. Disengaged combat, he says, would help minimize casualties. With the political pressure to minimize casualties, disengaged combat would greatly increase US freedom of action.[53] Although Mazarr's first two reasons seem well-founded,

his third reason advocates changing methods of warfare for the sake of shifting political preference. This is potentially dangerous reasoning. Regardless of what force planning approach the military uses (bottom-up, top-down, scenario, mission, technology, fiscal, or other) the need to fight and win wars must drive the reasoning process. Building a military based on the fear of public opinion polls or negative media coverage is myopic and reckless. Disengaged combat may have immense utility, but promoting it should not include the issue of casualty sensitivity.

Are not some options in war, costly as they may seem, the most effective in the long run by demonstrating to the world America's commitment? Conversely, does not a doctrine that seeks to preserve before it seeks to destroy inevitably lead to a Maginot line mentality?[54] These circumstances do not necessarily apply to the US military. The questions do, however, challenge military doctrine writers to consider the consequences of inadvertently following political trends that may change unexpectably and without reason. Warfighting doctrine cannot afford to shift with the winds of public emotion. A military that attempts to inculcate public sensitivities and biases into its methods of warfare risks deviating from the principles of successful warfare and turning war into something that it is not.

In summary, the dangers are serious for any country or military no longer able to summon the moral courage to sacrifice for its ideals. For national security strategists the dangers are the loss of international influence and prestige. A country unwilling to intervene and risk danger becomes a non-player on the international stage. For the military the danger of becoming too sensitive to casualties is even more serious. The

spread of political and public hesitancy and hyper-conservatism can permeate the thinking of military leaders, military doctrine, military force structure, and finally military operations and tactics. The possible consequences for such a military are an over-reliance on technology, unpreparedness, and a lack of morale and will to contend with the harsh realities of war.

VII. Killing the Enemy–How Many Is Too Many?

Casualty sensitivity is not limited to only friendly casualties. A further manifestation of this trend is America's sensitivity to *enemy* casualties. The historian John Keegan points out that the American public has grown increasingly uneasy witnessing the death of enemy forces and civilians. Although rich states like the US have remained relatively unaffected by the horror of war, little by little the horror is taking hold.[55] Keegan argues that its is scarcely possible anywhere in the world today to find support for the opinion that war is a justifiable activity. Even in the Gulf War initial public enthusiasms quickly waned once visual evidence of the carnage had been presented.[56] America, like many modern democracies, is becoming as intolerant of enemy casualties as they are of their own.

This growing awareness of enemy casualties by the pubic has begun to manifest itself in how the US military applies force. The American way of war is, in part, changing. Planning and training to fight only unconstrained *total* war fails to account for the shift in

today's social and political surroundings. British historian Michael Howard states, "the military system of a nation is not an independent section of the social system, but an aspect of it in its totality."[57] The change within America's collective conscious is changing the US military. Expectations of commanders on the battlefield have already changed. No longer is it enough to physically destroy, kill, wound, scatter, or imprison as many enemy as possible. A new set of criteria have been added. Commanders operating in environments of limited objectives are constrained in the use of firepower and held accountable for unintended destruction, collateral damage, and unnecessary enemy casualties.[58] Limited ends have in many cases become synonymous with using limited ways and limited means.

Kagan attributes this unprecedented shift away from unlimited war to a change in civilization's attitude. This effort at peace-making is motivated not by calculation of political interest but by repulsion from the horror war brings.[59] Referring to the national security policy of the United States[60], Kagan states that for the first time in history humanitarianism has been declared as a primary principle of a great power's foreign policy. Furthermore, for the first time there is broad support for the United Nations and a wide commitment by many disinterested states to providing peace-keeping forces in the name of world peace. Despite all the confusion of the times, Kagan believes it is now possible to "glimpse the emerging outline of a world without war".[61] Kagan's optimism and hope that war is on the decline is not universal. For some this "horror of war" is changing America's moral capacity to fully employ its strength and enhancing the possibility of conflict.

Harvey Sapolsky, co-author of a previously cited article, states that in addition to spending more money on reducing the risk of death than most other peoples, Americans are also beginning to experience "growing qualms" about killing enemy soldiers. Since WWII, when the US strategic bombing campaign killed over 300,000 German and 330,000 Japanese civilians, self-imposed restrictions have intensified. According to Sapolsky, the US, wishing to avoid repeating that level of destruction clearly delineated what it considered to be non-legitimate wartime targets. These included such objects as hospitals, residential areas, dams, crops, religious sites, and markets. This increased sensitivity manifested itself during the Gulf War. During the war, US forces bombed an Iraqi air-raid shelter in Amiriya, believing it instead to be a military communications center. The bombing killed more than 300 civilians. Although the consequences were unintended the result was closer control by Washington and a near early termination of the air campaign.[62] For Sapolsky this is a clearly too much constraint. All this "squeamishness", argues Sapolsky, is undermining America's ability to wage war.

America's ability to *wage* war is first and foremost a function of the US military's ability to do its job. Although Clausewitz correctly includes the *people* and the *government* as the other key legs to his triad, it is still the military that must fight. Once committed, the military is the tool for achieving the objective. The public and the government can afford to wax and wane with emotional misgivings and faulty reasoning, but the military has no such latitude. If America's ability to wage war is restricted, it must be a political restriction involving the decision to intervene. Once committed, the military must be free to fight. Political sensitivities should not force the military to be "squeamish"

about accomplishing its assigned mission. Politicians can wring their hands over the difficult decisions of intervention, but the military must commit itself without inhibition if it is to be effective. Military leadership, beginning at the highest levels, must be cognizant of public concerns, but firmly anchored to the reality that warfare is brutal and costly.

The US military, however, can never be completely free to fight unconstrained. Although the military cannot allow misinterpreted public sensitivities to constrain its capabilities, the military is still a tool of national policy. The US government uses the military for rational reasons to achieve rational ends. War remains a political act; it cannot be separated from politics or political considerations. Moreover, the politics of a democracy mirror the values of the nation; therefore, the values and traditions of the culture constrain the US military as much as the rational pursuit of policy. The US military is a product of the American culture; and as such, it must pursue war within the moral parameters of the American culture. American values and tradition play a powerful role in shaping America's ability to fight wars.

VIII. The Role of Morality

"Squeamish" may be the wrong word to describe America's concern over enemy casualties and material destruction. The constraints that appear to govern America's use of force go much deeper than just the destruction leveled against the enemy in WWII. America's idea of waging warfare has always contained a strong element of moral constraint. War is always judged twice. First, for the reasons states enter into war; secondly, for the means and methods they employ. Understanding the influence of both reasons is a necessary link to understanding why America is sympathetic and reactive to even *enemy* casualties.

These moral constraints stem partially from religious traditions that sought to determine what conditions permitted or prohibited war, and partially from the secular development of international law that sought to determine what kinds of military actions were (and are) legitimate. Both constructs have their roots deeply set in history. The concept of "just and unjust war" dates back to the Christian Church and St. Augustine (AD 354-430). International law emerged a thousand years later with the writings of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645).[63] Old as they are, both of these constraints continue to influence modern public opinion and military decision-making. Combined, the just war theorem and international law reflect a common purpose that underlies many of the theories, constraints, and emotions of using armed force. The common purpose of both constructs is to *limit the human suffering caused by war and to protect those who are not implicated in the struggle*.[64]

The theories of just war begin with St. Augustine. Driven in part for practical reasons, St. Augustine wrote his tenets of just war in order to aid the Pope in settling disputes among the temporal rulers of the day. Refining Augustine's loose tenets, St. Thomas Aquinas defined what he believed to be three necessary conditions of just war. First, the war must be undertaken by the authority of the state. Second, there must a just cause. And lastly, the intention of those fighting should be right; that is to say, those who wage wars justly should have peace as the object of their intention. These core teachings, founded on Christian theology, were further refined by various scholars over time. Today the following criteria frequently appear in comprehensive just war theories: 1.) legitimate or competent authority, 2.) just cause, 3.) right intention, 4.) announcement of intention, 5.) last resort, 6.) reasonable hope of success, 7.) proportionality, and 8.) just conduct.[65] Centuries later, America subtly absorbed these Christian-based criteria into its culture.

Judeo-Christian theology shaped many of the uniquely American attributes that define the American culture today. Because of this influence, America has accepted and justified war within the precepts acknowledged by the Christian church. The Christian tradition and the tenets of just war are inextricably linked. When America contemplates war the "justness" of the cause is always a primary issue. Although one could argue that America has strayed from its founding values and waged unjust wars, these times have been the regrettable exceptions. America believes in the necessity of war–morally justified and morally executed. Causes out of synch with American values, like the conquest and extermination of the American Indians, leave behind a residue of guilt and a permanent stain on the American conscience.

Using morality to shape and guide foreign policy and military operations is a slippery slope. The tenets of just war are useful, but they hardly provide an indisputable method for picking the good guys and the bad guys. Which adversary in war decides the justness of the cause or the morality of the intention? President Woodrow Wilson, an ardent interventionist, insisted that the same principles and moral scruples that shaped his foreign policy also guided his use of military power. Shortly after the US Navy occupied Veracruz, Mexico in 1914, Wilson delivered the US Naval Academy commencement speech. Speaking to the midshipmen graduates, Wilson proclaimed, "The force of America is the force of moral principle". . . . "Is that not something to be proud of?" he asked, "that you know how to use force like men of conscience and like gentlemen, serving your fellow men and trying not to overcome them."[66] Wilson's self-righteous statement is an excellent example of one man able to rationalize all his actions as preordained and just. Like so many leaders, Wilson believed America always occupied the moral high ground, and that American actions were necessary, good, and best for the world. It should be noted, however, that the moral high ground did not keep Wilson from presiding over more armed conflict than any president, before or since.

Not all decision makers accept the linkage between morality and national security. George Kennan, the respected American diplomat, believes strongly that morality has no place in foreign policy. Writing in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, Kennan explains that the national interests for which government has to concern itself are basically those of military security, the integrity of its political life, and the well-being of it people. These, Kennan says, have no moral quality. Government is an agent of the people, not a principal. Its

obligation is to the interests of the national society it represents, not to the moral impulses that individual elements of that society may experience.[67] The application of military force must be considered a national tool used in the interests of the society it seeks to protect. It is an unavoidable necessity of national existence and therefore not subject to moral classification of either "good" or "bad".

IX. Morality and Warfighting

Soldiers are not responsible for the overall justice of the wars they fight–that belongs to the political leaders and collective conscience of the people.[68] Soldiers are responsible for the conduct of the war, but even this is not solely the soldier's responsibility. Michael Walzer argues in *Just and Unjust Wars*, that "the moral reality of war is not fixed by the actual activities of soldiers but by the opinions of mankind."[69] By this Walzer means that the morality of war is, in part, fixed by the activities of philosophers, lawyers, journalists, and a multitude of other opinion shapers. When these views are deemed plausible by the public they take on a shared value within the culture. This shared value then becomes the established norm from which actions in combat are judged. Issues such as cruelty and injustice are judged by the culture and society of the soldiers responsible. What this means to the soldier and military leader is that military action must be in synch with the values of the society from which it comes. If the society possesses a great sensitivity toward unnecessary enemy casualties or material destruction then that becomes the standard by which the military is judged. The military is not free to ignore or alter these mores. Moreover, when this morality is shared by a large portion of the international community

it becomes international law. The caveat is that a nation's moral acceptance of behavior in combat most always transcends whatever international law may be in existence at the time.

The mass killings and ethnic cleansing that came to characterize the conflict in former Yugoslavia provide a timely example of combat within a culturally-defined set of moral standards. Not long ago an interviewer on National Public Radio asked a guest Bosnian-Serb leader whether his acts against innocent Muslim civilians deserved to be tried as war crimes. The Bosnian-Serb, laughing in disbelief, found the whole accusation absurd. For him his actions had been nothing less than heroic acts of national defense. His orders and actions were no more criminal than the US bombings of innocent civilians in WWII. For much of the international community his actions were criminal; for his fellow countrymen he was a respected leader doing what had to be done. Who is correct?

It is likely General MacArthur would have had little trouble deciding. In confirming the death sentence for Japanese General Tomayuki Yamashita, MacArthur said, "The soldier, be he friend or foe, is charged with the protection of the weak and the unarmed. It is the very essence and reason for his being. When he violates this sacred trust, he not only profanes his entire cult but threatens the fabric of international society."[70] The difference between The Bosnian-Serb leader and General Yamashita was morally negligible. Both presumably had operated without restraint, employing means beyond necessity and against the nature of man. However, both were deemed right by the standards and circumstances of their cultures. On the other hand, judged by American cultural values, they were war criminals.

In summary, soldiers derive their moral constraints largely from the culture from which they come. The American society judges and therefore constrains the American soldier. If the American public is sensitive to combat casualties, then it is reasonable to expect this sensitivity to exist in some degree within the American military. How strong this sensitivity is and to what degree it influences military effectiveness will vary. What is important, however, is that the military acknowledges these attitudes, factors them into operations, and does not allow them to assume primary importance.

X. Conclusion

The reasons and underlying causes for why the public, and in turn, the nation's leaders have become increasingly sensitive to combat casualties are many. These reasons require no judgment; they are neither good nor bad. Casualty sensitivity is, however, a shifting, relative value. The rise and fall of casualty numbers throughout a war has a direct and predictable influence on public support. Unfortunately, this incomplete truth has shaped the reasoning of many political leaders. In reality, the relationship between casualties and public support is not that simple. More important than the number of combat casualties is the cause at stake. Determining this cause is the responsibility of political leadership. Political leadership decides the cause, and political leadership must lead the American people to follow that cause. A powerful cause, such as a threat like Nazi Germany, backed by the leadership of someone like President Roosevelt, will quickly

rally a nation to unequaled sacrifice. On the other hand, the causes and reasons for conducting peace-keeping missions amongst distant cultures are often buried by the misguided prioritizing of costs and potential casualties. Hesitancy to act because of potential casualties, or civilian efforts to shape military operations to minimize casualties, are a strong indicator that the cause at stake lacks value.

For the military, the issue of casualty sensitivity should have a very different impact. The military has the responsibility of ensuring the nation's security. This solemn responsibility leaves no room for anything less than full effort. Within the parameters of political and cultural boundaries, the military must be free (consciously and subconsciously) to employ enough force to ensure mission accomplishment. National leaders must make the decision to use force with the understanding that it cannot be made into something less than it is. This has nothing to do with limited strategic aims, but is has everything to do with limited means. The military cannot risk the emotional reservations that undermine and dilute efforts. To do so only endangers the mission and the lives of soldiers involved.

In deciding how to best employ combat power to achieve a military objective, leaders need to focus on a critical priority. First, how can US forces best achieve the assigned objective? Leaders must make this decision based solely on mission accomplishment. It is a matter of applying the most effective resources to ensure the greatest chance of success. Second, how can US forces minimize friendly casualties? Only after the leadership selects the best course of action should ways to minimize casualties begin. Keep in mind that in the initial selection of the course of action *risk* was already considered. Finally, once the

leadership selects the most effective course of action and explores ways to minimize casualties, then the leadership can explore methods to minimize collateral damage. By following these sequential considerations, leaders work within the concerns of society while avoiding the inevitable quagmire of misdirected intentions.

ENDNOTES

[1] Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 95.

[2] George Bush, "State of the Union", January 29, 1991, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 57, no. 9 (February 15, 1991), p. 261.

[3] Cover, *Time*, November 27, 1995, vol. 146, no.22.

[4] Steve Komarow, "Blunt Talk from Top Marine: Peacekeeping Risky Business," *USA Today*, 7 June 1995, sec. 1a, p. 11.

[5] Karl W. Eikenberry, "Take No Casualties", and Harvey M. Sapolsky and Jeremy Shapiro, "Casualties, Technology, and America's Future Wars", *Parameters*, US Army War College Quarterly, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, Summer 1996.

[6] Sapolsky and Shapiro, p. 119.

[7] Thomas L. Friedman, "The No-Dead War," *New York Times*, 23 August 1995, sec 1A, p. 21.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Karl W. Eikenberry, "Take No Casualties", *Parameters*, US Army War College Quarterly, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, Summer 1996, p 112-113.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed. And trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 87-88.

[14] Eikenberry, p. 112.

[15] Ibid.

[16] These figures were taken from Karl W. Eikenberry, "Take No Casualties", *Parameters*, US Army War College Quarterly, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, Summer 1996, p. 113. His data was from a Reference Section inquiry, US Army War College Library, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 27 September 1993.

[17] Mark Lorell and Charles Kelley, Jr. *Casualties, Public Opinion, and Presidential Policy During the Vietnam War*, RAND Study, Project Air Force, March 1985, p. 61.

[18] Lorell and Kelly, p. 62-63.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Larson, p. 68.

[21], Lorell and Kelly, p. 21.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 23.

[24] Ibid., p. 36.

[25] Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus*, RAND Study, 1996, p. xvi.

[26] Ibid., p. 100.

[27] Ibid., pp. 36-39.

[28] Ibid., p. 102.

[29] Strategy and Force Planning Faculty, eds., *Strategy and Force Planning*, "Competing Grand Strategies" by Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1995), 116.

[30] Doug Bandow, "Keeping the Troops at Home", *Current History*, January 1994, pp. 8-13.

[31] Theodore Roosevelt, as quoted in "American Power--A Guide for the Perplexed", Robert Kagan, *Commentary*, April 1996, p. 29.

[32] Ibid., p. 30.

[33] Kagan, p. 26.

[34] Ibid., p. 31.

[35] Harvey M. Sapolsky and Jeremy Shapiro, "Casualties, Technology, and America's Future Wars", *Parameters*, US Army War College Quarterly, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, Summer 1996, p. 119.

[36] Ibid., p. 121.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p. 123.

[40] Ibid., p. 126.

[41] Edward Luttwak, "Post-Heroic Warfare", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3, May/June 1995, pp. 112- 113.

[42] Ibid., 113-122.

[43] Patrick C. Neary, "It Takes A Hero", *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 75, No. 5, September/October 1996, pp. 169-170.

[44] Richard N. Haas, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World*, (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994), 14.

[45] Ibid., p. 15.

[46] Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, US Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1 February 1995, p. vii.

[47] FM 100-7, *Decisive Force: The Army in Theater Operations*, HQ, Department of the Army, Washington DC, 31 May 1995, p. 1-2.

[48] Eikenberry, pp. 116-117.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Erich von Manstein, *Lost Victories*, (Novato: Presidio Press, 1982), 220.

[51] James I. Robertson, Jr., "Stonewall in the Shenandoah", *In Battle Chronicles of the Civil War: 1862*, ed. James A. McPherson, (New York: Henry Holt, 1992), 45.

[52] Michael J. Mazarr, *The Revolution in Military Affairs: A Framework for Defense Planning*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, Barracks, PA, June 10, 1994, pp. 16-19.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Eikenberry.

[55] John Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 56-57.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, (New York: Collier Books, 1969), 1.

[58] A.J. Bacevich, "New Rules: Modern War and Military Professionalism", *Parameters*, US Army War College Quarterly, Vol. XX, No. 4, December 1990, p. 22.

[59] Ibid., p. 58.

[60] *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, The White House, (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, February 1996) 22-23.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Harvey Sapolsky, "War Without Killing", September 1992, as cited by David Shukman, *Tomorrow's War: The Threat of High-Technology Weapons*, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996), 210-211.

[63] Telford Taylor, "Just and Unjust Wars" in Malham M. Wakin, ed. *War, Morality, and the Military Profession*, (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), 227.

[64] Malham M. Wakin, ed. *War, Morality, and the Military Profession*, (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), 222.

[65] James F. Childress, "Just-War Theories: The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities, and Functions of Their Criteria", in Malham M. Wakin, ed. *War, Morality, and the Military Profession*, (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), 257.

[66] Frederick S. Calhoun, *Uses of Force and Wilsonian Foreign Policy*, (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1993), 2.

[67] George F. Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1985/86, Vol. 64, No. 2, pp. 205-206.

[68] Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, (Basic Books, 1992), 304.

[69] Ibid., p. 15.

[70] Malham M. Wakin, p. 223.

Bibliography

Bailey, Sydney D. *Prohibitions and Restraints in War*, Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1972.

Brayton Abbott A. And Stephana J. Landwehr. *The Politics of War and Peace*, Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1981.

Calahan, H.A.. *What Makes A War End?*, New York: The Vanguard Press, 1944.

Dupuy, T.N., COL (Ret.). *Understanding War: History and Theory in Combat*, Ney York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987.

Fuller, J.F.C. *The Foundations of the Science of War*, Art of War Colloquium, US Army War College, December 1983.

Gray, Colin S. *War, Peace, and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for the Next Century*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990.

Hallett, Brian, ed. *Engulfed in War: Just War and the Persian Gulf*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii, 1991.

Haass, Richard N., *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 1994.

Larson, Eric V. *Casualties and Concensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for US Military Operations*, RAND, 1996.

Lorell, Mark and Charles Kelly, Jr., *Casualties, Public Opinion, and Presidential Policy During the Vietnam War*, RAND, March 1985.

Mazarr, Micheal J. *The Revolution in Military Affairs*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, June 10, 1994.

Oppenheim, Felix E., *The Place of Morality in Foreign Policy*, Lexington: D.C. Health and Company, 1991.

Schwarz, Benjamin C., *Casualties: Public Opinion and US Military Intervention*, RAND, 1994.

Shukman, David. *Tomorrow's Wars: The Threat of High Technology Weapons*, New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995.

Vaux, Kenneth L., *Ethics and the Gulf War*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.

Wakin Malham M., ed. *War, Morality, and the Military Profession*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1986.

Walzer, Michael. Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations. USA: Basic Books, 1977.

Periodicals and Articles

Bacevich, A.J. "Preserving a Well-Bred Horse." *The National Interest*, no. 37, (Fall 1994): 43--49.

Eikenberry, Karl W. "Take No Casualties." *Parameters*, vol. 26, no. 2, (Summer 1996): 109-118.

Kagan, Robert. "American Power–A Guide for the Perplexed", *Commentary*, (April 1996): 21-31.

Kennan, George F., "Morality and Foreign Policy". *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 64, no. 2, (Winter 1985/86): 205-218.

Luttwak, Edward. "Post-Heroic Warfare". *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 3, (May/June 1995): 109-122.

Sapolsky, Havey M. and Jeremy Shapiro. "Casualties, Technology, and America's Future Wars." *Parameters*, vol. 26, no. 2, (Summer 1996): 119-127.

Schneider, James J. "The Theory of the Empty Battlefield." *RUSI*, (Summer 1987): 37-44.

Sterba, James P. "Understanding Evil: American Slavery, the Holocaust, and the Conquest of the American Indians." *Ethics Journal*, vol. 106, no. 2. (January 1996): 424-448.

Government Documents and Manuals

Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, US Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1 February 1995.

United States Army, Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*. Washington D.C., US Government Printing Office, 1993.

United States Army, Student Text 101-6, *G1/G4 Battle Book*, US Army Command and Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, June 1995.